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JAN
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GAMBIT
LEE WEEKS
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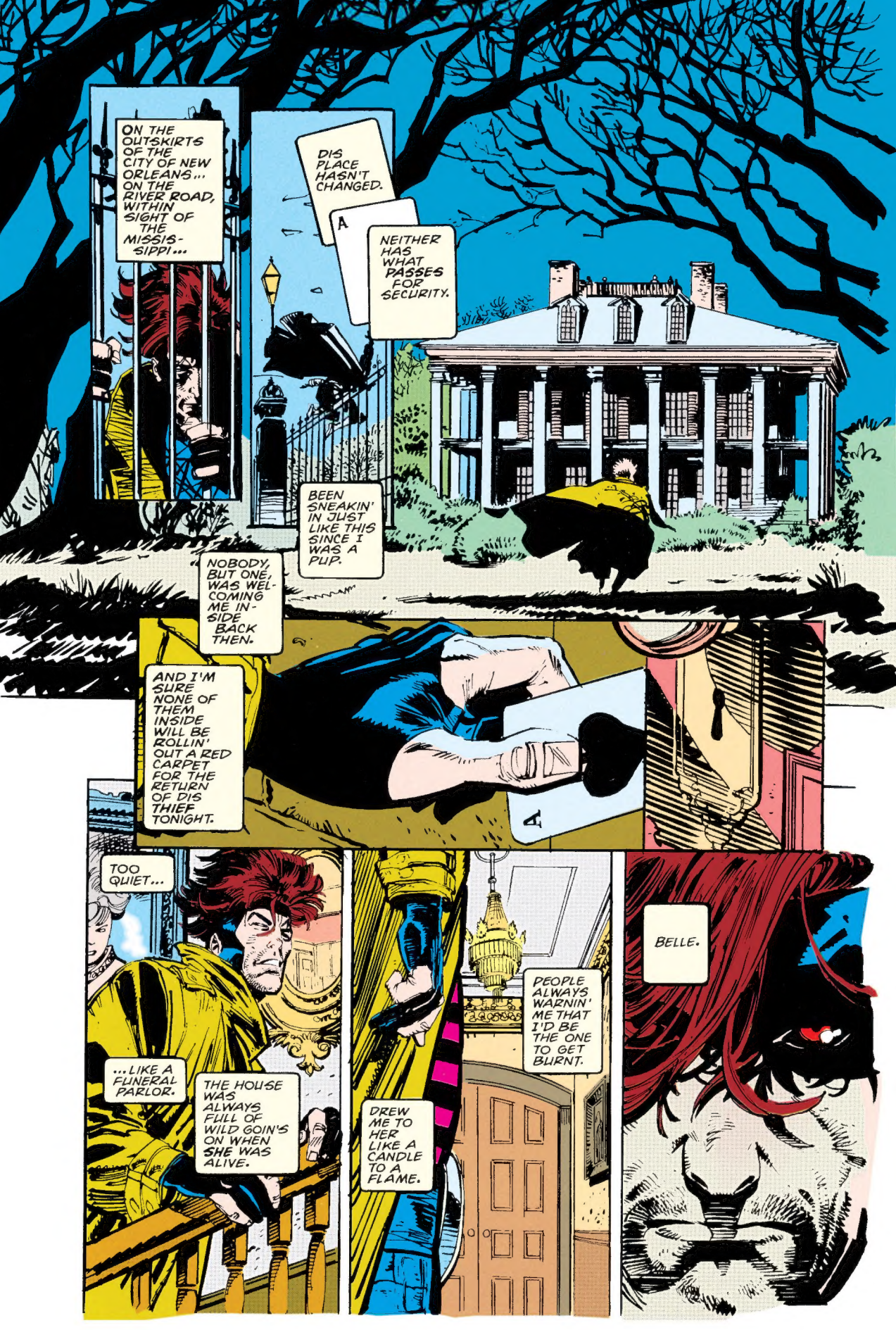
ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF THE CITY OF NEW ORLEANS... ON THE RIVER ROAD, WITHIN SIGHT OF THE MISSIS-SIPPI...
DIS PLACE HASN'T CHANGED.
NEITHER HAS WHAT PASSES FOR SECURITY.
BEEN SNEAKIN' IN JUST LIKE THIS SINCE I WAS A PUP.
NOBODY, BUT ONE, WAS WELCOMING ME INSIDE BACK THEN.
AND I'M SURE NONE OF THEM INSIDE WILL BE ROLLIN' OUT A RED CARPET FOR THE RETURN OF DIS THIEF TONIGHT.
TOO QUIET...
...LIKE A FUNERAL PARLOR.
THE HOUSE WAS ALWAYS FULL OF WILD GOIN'S ON WHEN SHE WAS ALIVE.
DREW ME TO HER LIKE A CANDLE TO A FLAME.
PEOPLE ALWAYS WARNIN' ME THAT I'D BE THE ONE TO GET BURNT.
BELLE.

YOU'RE THE ONLY ONE THAT COULD BRING ME BACK TO DIS CITY.
YOU WERE THE ONLY REASON I STAYED AS LONG AS I DID.
AN' YOU WERE THE REASON I HAD TO LEAVE.
NOW I'M SEARCHIN' FOR THE GHOSTS OF MY YOUTH.
IT'S TRUE...
...YOU'RE ALIVE, CHERIE...
...YOU ARE ALIVE.

HONOR amongst THIEVES

STORY/ART HOWARD MACKIE / LEE WEEKS / KLAUS JANSON

COLORIST STEVE BUCCELLATO LETTERER RICHARD STARKINGS EDITOR BOB HARRAS CHIEF TOM DeFALCO

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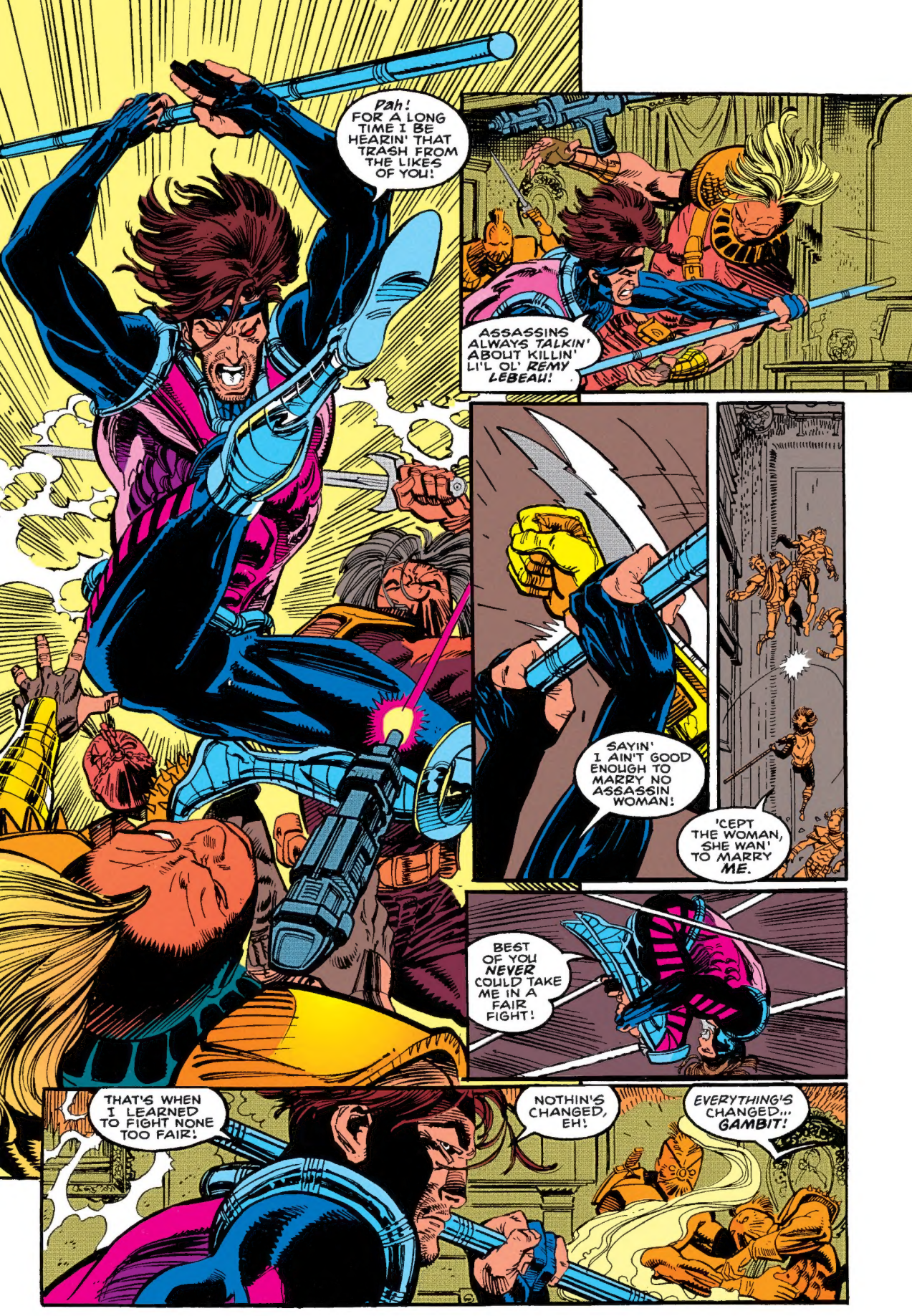
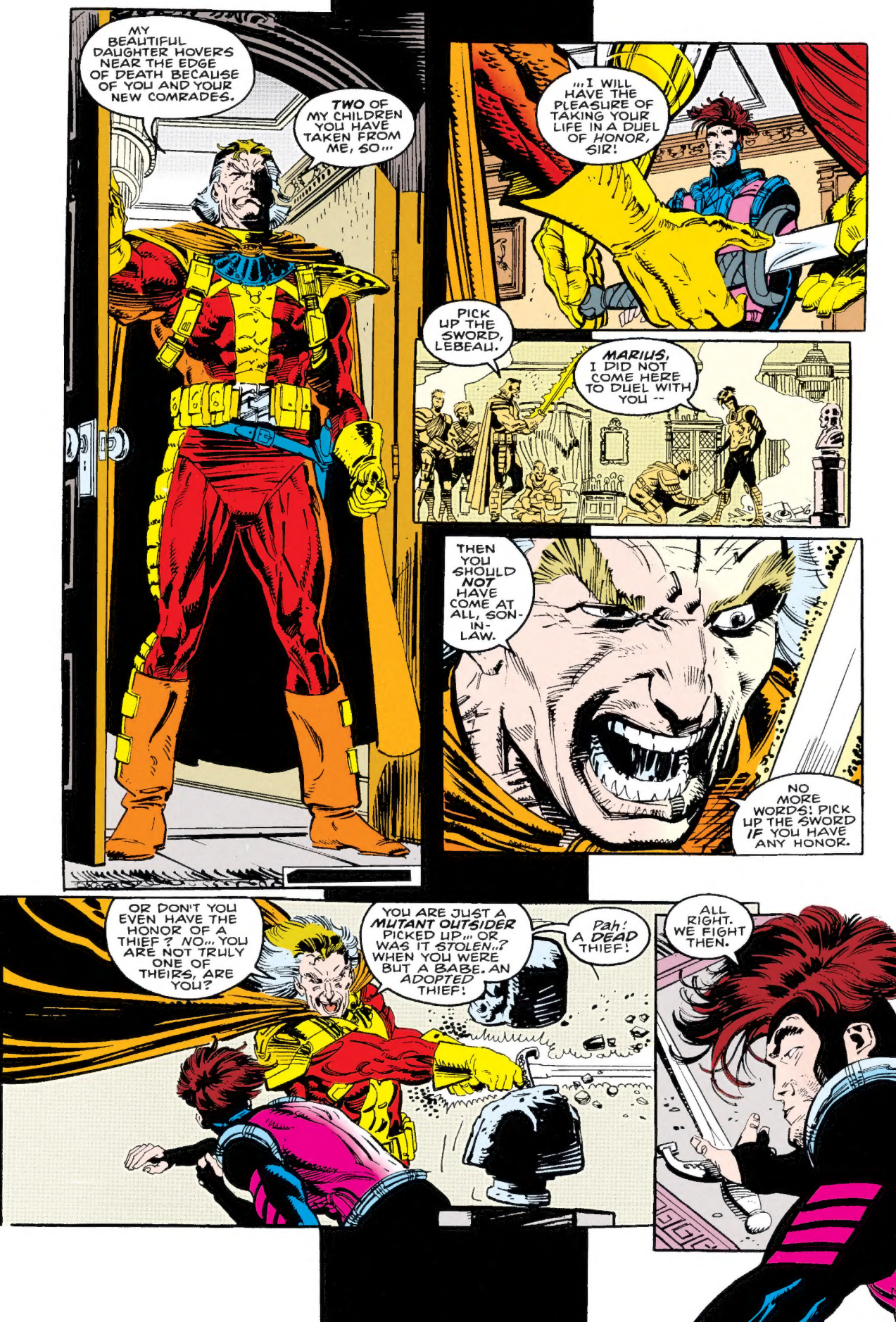
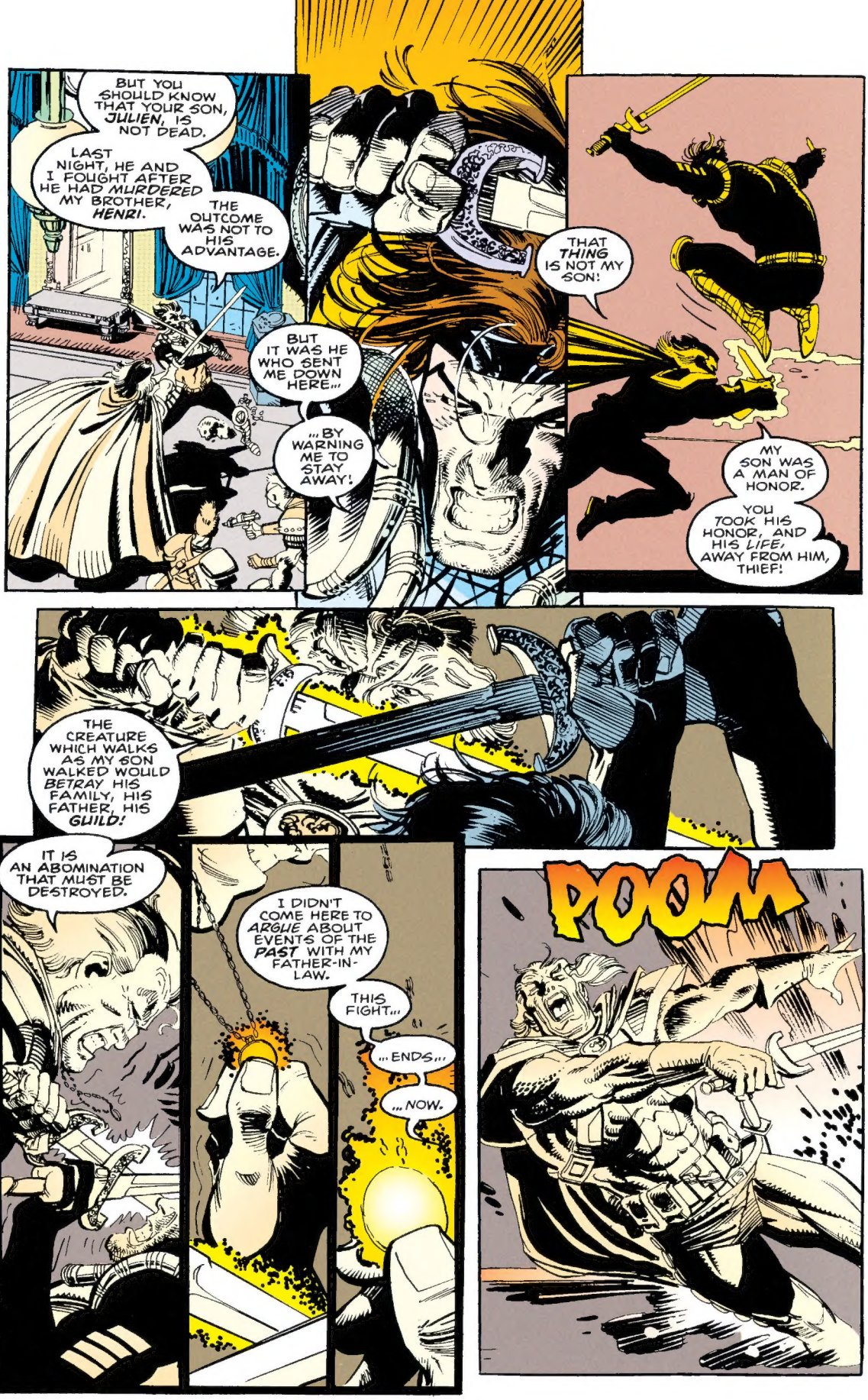
HOW, CHERIE?
I SAW YOU DIE.
HOLDING YOU IN MY ARMS, WATCHING THE LIFE DRAIN FROM YOUR BODY...
...I FELT A PIECE OF MY HEART DIE WITH YOU.
AND NOW...
ASSASSINS!
LEAVE ME WITH MY WIFE, KILLERS!
DON'T BE MAKIN' ME TAKE YOUR LIVES!
PTOOM PTOOM PTOOM
NO, T'IEF, YOU BE THE INTRUDER HERE...
...SO YOU'LL DO THE DYING!


Pah! FOR A LONG TIME I BE HEARIN' THAT TRASH FROM THE LIKES OF YOU!
ASSASSINS ALWAYS TALKIN' ABOUT KILLIN' LI'L OL' REMY LEBEAU!
SAYIN' I AIN'T GOOD ENOUGH TO MARRY NO ASSASSIN WOMAN!
'CEPT THE WOMAN, SHE WAN' TO MARRY ME.
BEST OF YOU NEVER COULD TAKE ME IN A FAIR FIGHT!
THAT'S WHEN I LEARNED TO FIGHT NONE TOO FAIR!
NOTHIN'S CHANGED, EH!
EVERYTHING'S CHANGED... GAMBIT!


MY BEAUTIFUL DAUGHTER HOVERS NEAR THE EDGE OF DEATH BECAUSE OF YOU AND YOUR NEW COMRADES.
TWO OF MY CHILDREN YOU HAVE TAKEN FROM ME, SO...
...I WILL HAVE THE PLEASURE OF TAKING YOUR LIFE IN A DUEL OF HONOR, SIR!
PICK UP THE SWORD, LEBEAU.
MARIUS, I DID NOT COME HERE TO DUEL WITH YOU --
THEN YOU SHOULD NOT HAVE COME AT ALL, SON-IN-LAW.
NO MORE WORDS! PICK UP THE SWORD IF YOU HAVE ANY HONOR.
OR DON'T YOU EVEN HAVE THE HONOR OF A THIEF? NO... YOU ARE NOT TRULY ONE OF THEIRS, ARE YOU?
YOU ARE JUST A MUTANT OUTSIDER PICKED UP... OR WAS IT STOLEN...? WHEN YOU WERE BUT A BABE. AN ADOPTED THIEF!
Pah! A DEAD THIEF!
ALL RIGHT. WE FIGHT THEN.


BUT YOU SHOULD KNOW THAT YOUR SON, JULIEN, IS NOT DEAD.
LAST NIGHT, HE AND I FOUGHT AFTER HE HAD MURDERED MY BROTHER, HENRI.
THE OUTCOME WAS NOT TO HIS ADVANTAGE.
BUT IT WAS HE WHO SENT ME DOWN HERE...
...BY WARNING ME TO STAY AWAY!
THAT THING IS NOT MY SON!
MY SON WAS A MAN OF HONOR.
YOU TOOK HIS HONOR, AND HIS LIFE, AWAY FROM HIM, THIEF!
THE CREATURE WHICH WALKS AS MY SON WALKED WOULD BETRAY HIS FAMILY, HIS FATHER, HIS GUILD!
IT IS AN ABOMINATION THAT MUST BE DESTROYED.
I DIDN'T COME HERE TO ARGUE ABOUT EVENTS OF THE PAST WITH MY FATHER-IN-LAW.
THIS FIGHT...
...ENDS...
...NOW.
POOM

CALL OFF YOUR KILLERS, MARIUS.
I HAVE NO DESIRE TO KILL MY FATHER-IN-LAW!
KILL THIS HONORLESS MUTANT THIEF...
NOW.
KTASH
PARDON ME, FELLAS...
...BUT I DON'T TAKE KINDLY TO ALL THIS KILLIN' TALK.
GAMBIT HERE IS A TEAM-MATE O' MINE...
...AND EVEN THOUGH HE DOES TEND TO RUN OFF AT THE MOUTH...
...I LIKE HIM THE WAY HE IS -- ALIVE!
Y'ALL TAKE CARE NOW!

ROGUE, MA CHERIE, I ASKED YOU TO STAY OUT OF DIS!

ASKIN' AIN'T GETTIN', REMY!

'SIDES, THERE SEEMS TO BE MORE THAN ENOUGH O' THIS HERE LITTLE GAME FOR BOTH OF US!

ugph!

M'SWEET, AS YOU RECENTLY POINTED OUT T'ME IN THE DANGER ROOM...

...THIS IS NO GAME!

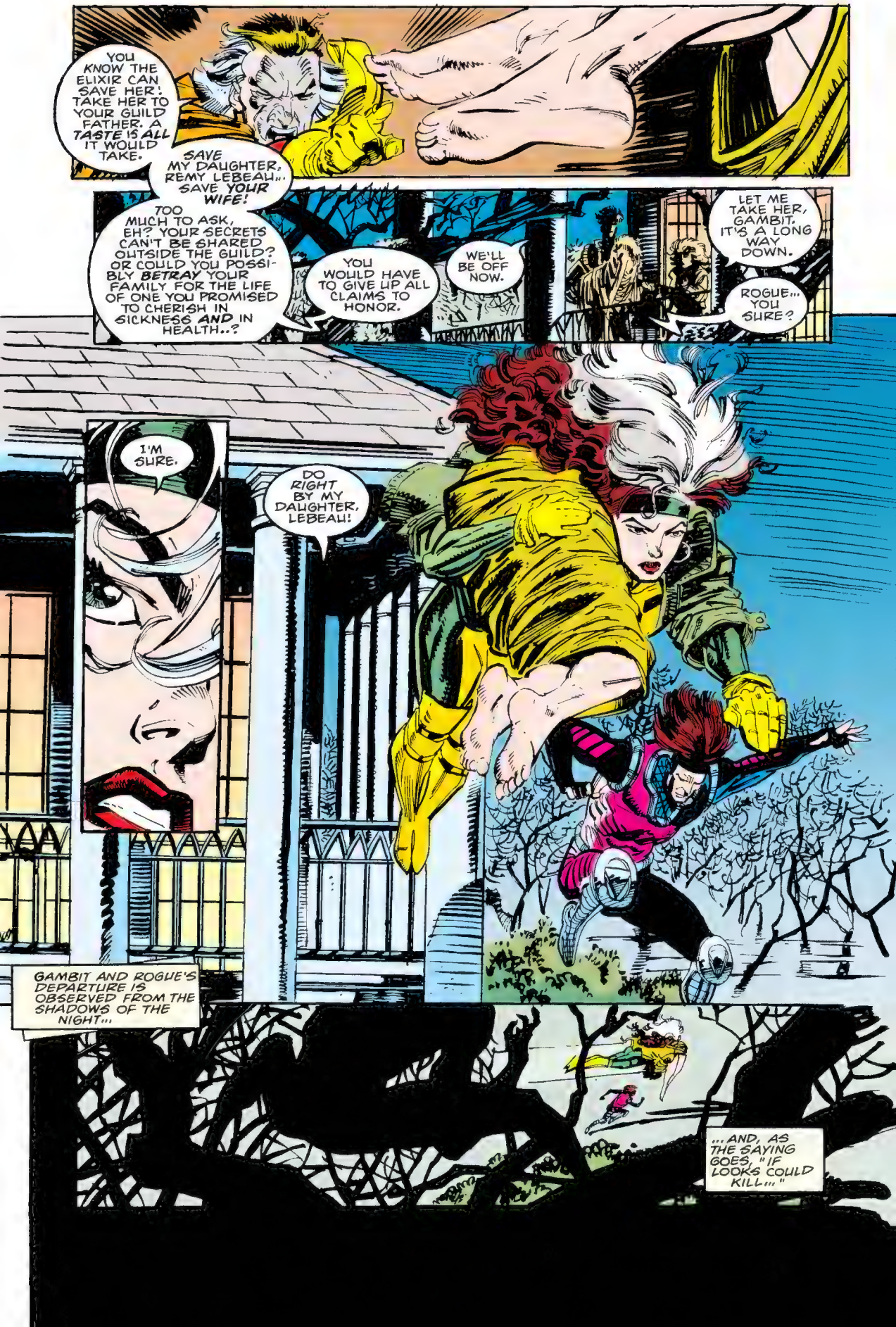
ASSASSINS ALWAYS PLAY FOR KEEPS!

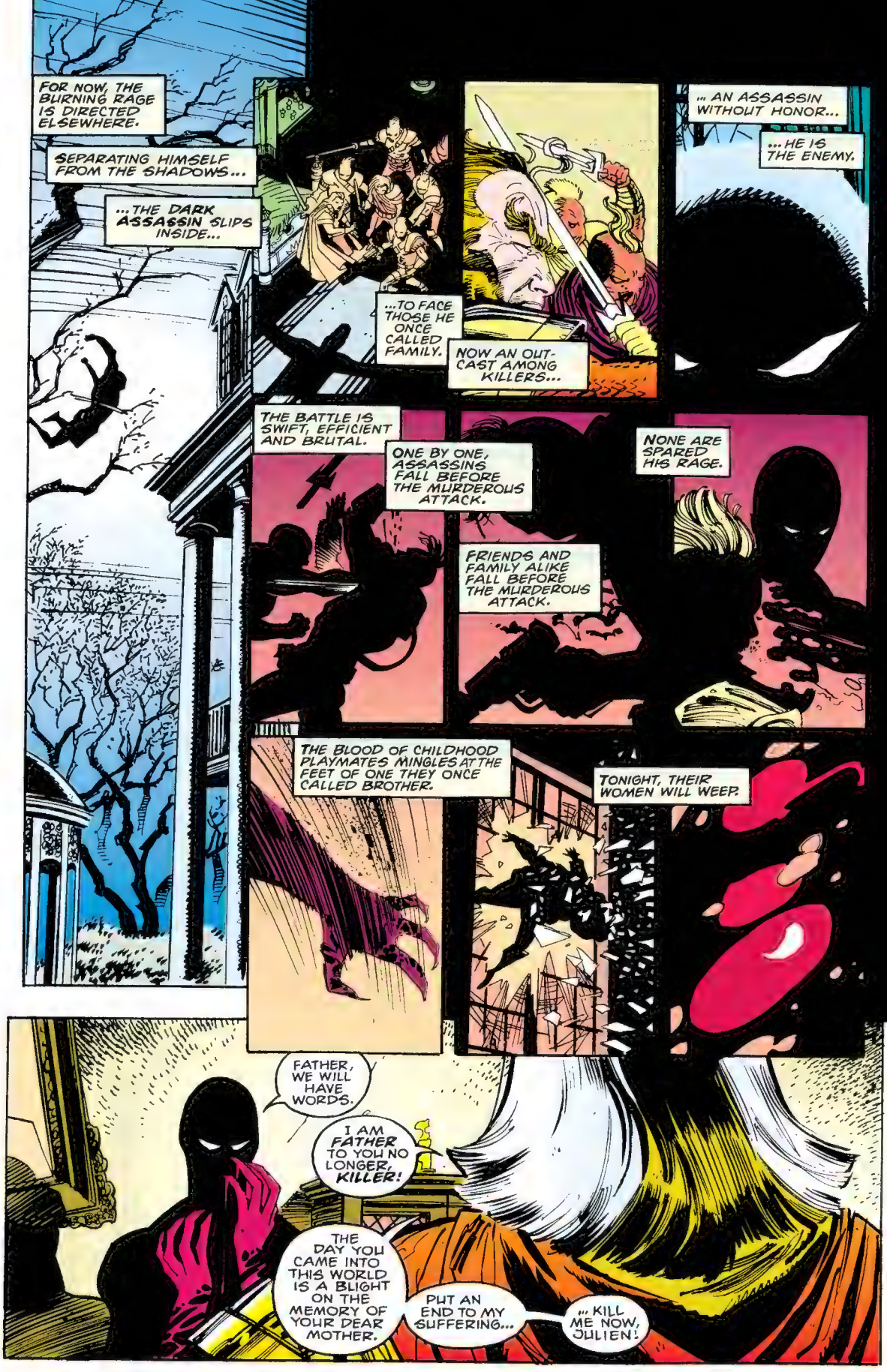
BUT, FORTUNATELY, SO DO THIEVES!

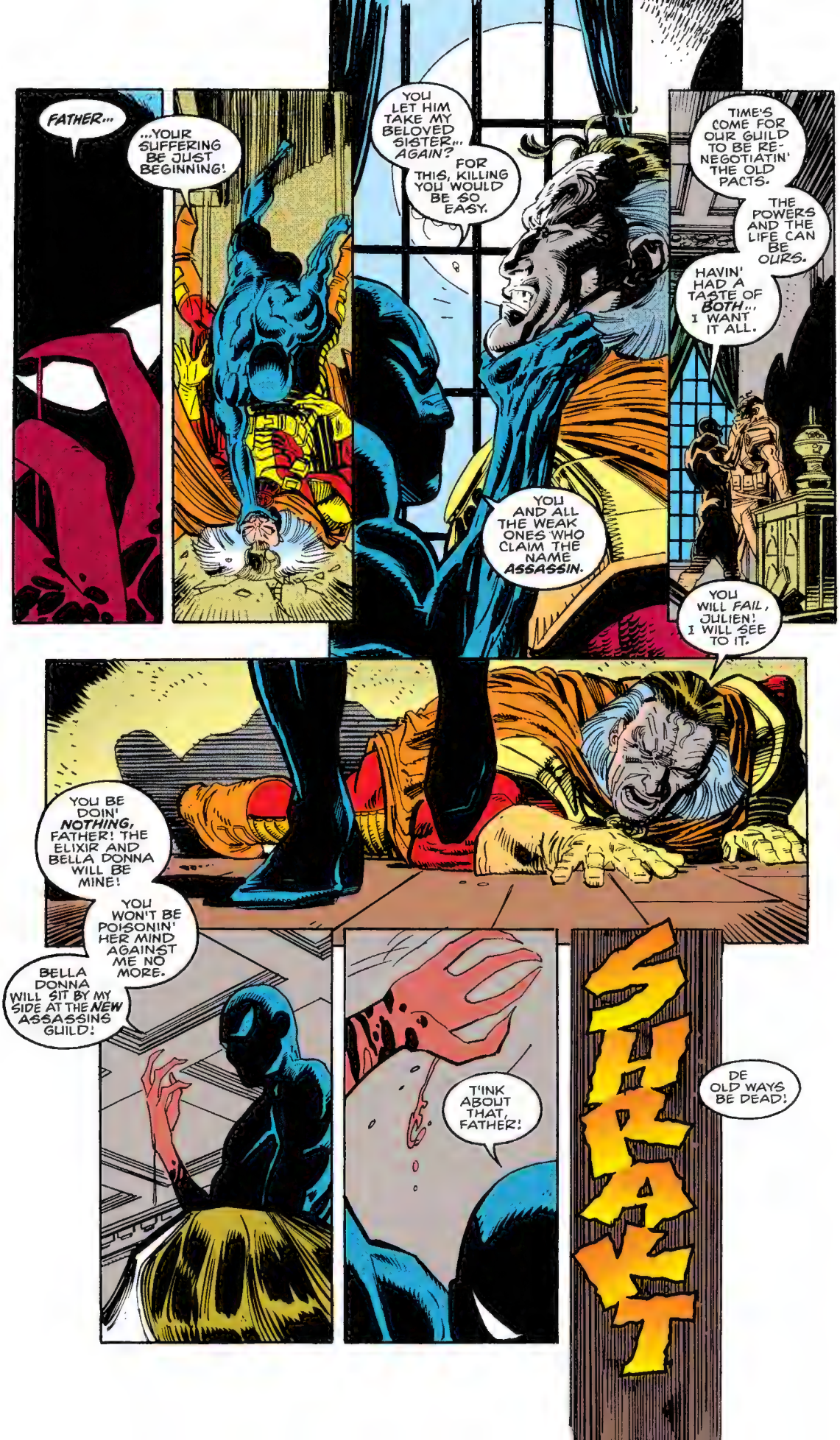
AND X-MEN!

Touché.

I'LL BE TAKIN' MY WIFE NOW.
NOW YOU STEAL MY DAUGHTER, THIEF!
IF YOU REALLY WANT TO SAVE BELLA DONNA...
...THEN LET HER TASTE THE PRECIOUS ELIXIR OF THE THIEVES.
DO NOT INSULT ME, SIR!
ELIXIR?
I DON'T KNOW--
WE ASSASSINS HAVE ALWAYS KNOWN ABOUT IT.
MANY HAVE WANTED IT FOR OURSELVES, BUT... THAT IS NOT TO BE.
A PACT WAS MADE LONG AGO.
WE GET THE POWER.
THE THIEVES GET THE ELIXIR OF LIFE.
GAMBIT, WHAT'S HE TALKIN' ABOUT?
OL' WIVES TALES AND LEGENDS, ROGUE. NOTHIN' MORE.
WHAT? YOU DON'T WANT YOUR MUTANT GIRLFRIEND TO HEAR THE TRUTH, REMY?
PERHAPS IT'S TIME FOR ALL TO KNOW THE TRUTH.


YOU KNOW THE ELIXIR CAN SAVE HER! TAKE HER TO YOUR GUILD FATHER. A TASTE IS ALL IT WOULD TAKE.
SAVE MY DAUGHTER, REMY LEBEAU... SAVE YOUR WIFE!
TOO MUCH TO ASK, EH? YOUR SECRETS CAN'T BE SHARED OUTSIDE THE GUILD? OR COULD YOU POSSIBLY BETRAY YOUR FAMILY FOR THE LIFE OF ONE YOU PROMISED TO CHERISH IN SICKNESS AND IN HEALTH..?
YOU WOULD HAVE TO GIVE UP ALL CLAIMS TO HONOR.
WE'LL BE OFF NOW.
LET ME TAKE HER, GAMBIT. IT'S A LONG WAY DOWN.
ROGUE... YOU SURE?
I'M SURE.
DO RIGHT BY MY DAUGHTER, LEBEAU!
GAMBIT AND ROGUE'S DEPARTURE IS OBSERVED FROM THE SHADOWS OF THE NIGHT...
...AND, AS THE SAYING GOES, "IF LOOKS COULD KILL..."


FOR NOW, THE BURNING RAGE IS DIRECTED ELSEWHERE.
SEPARATING HIMSELF FROM THE SHADOWS...
...THE DARK ASSASSIN SLIPS INSIDE...
...TO FACE THOSE HE ONCE CALLED FAMILY.
NOW AN OUT-CAST AMONG KILLERS...
... AN ASSASSIN WITHOUT HONOR...
...HE IS THE ENEMY.
THE BATTLE IS SWIFT, EFFICIENT AND BRUTAL.
ONE BY ONE, ASSASSINS FALL BEFORE THE MURDEROUS ATTACK.
FRIENDS AND FAMILY ALIKE FALL BEFORE THE MURDEROUS ATTACK.
NONE ARE SPARED HIS RAGE.
THE BLOOD OF CHILDHOOD PLAYMATES MINGLES AT THE FEET OF ONE THEY ONCE CALLED BROTHER.
TONIGHT, THEIR WOMEN WEEP.
FATHER, WE WILL HAVE WORDS.
I AM FATHER TO YOU NO LONGER, KILLER!
THE DAY YOU CAME INTO THIS WORLD IS A BLIGHT ON THE MEMORY OF YOUR DEAR MOTHER.
PUT AN END TO MY SUFFERING...
... KILL ME NOW, JULIEN!

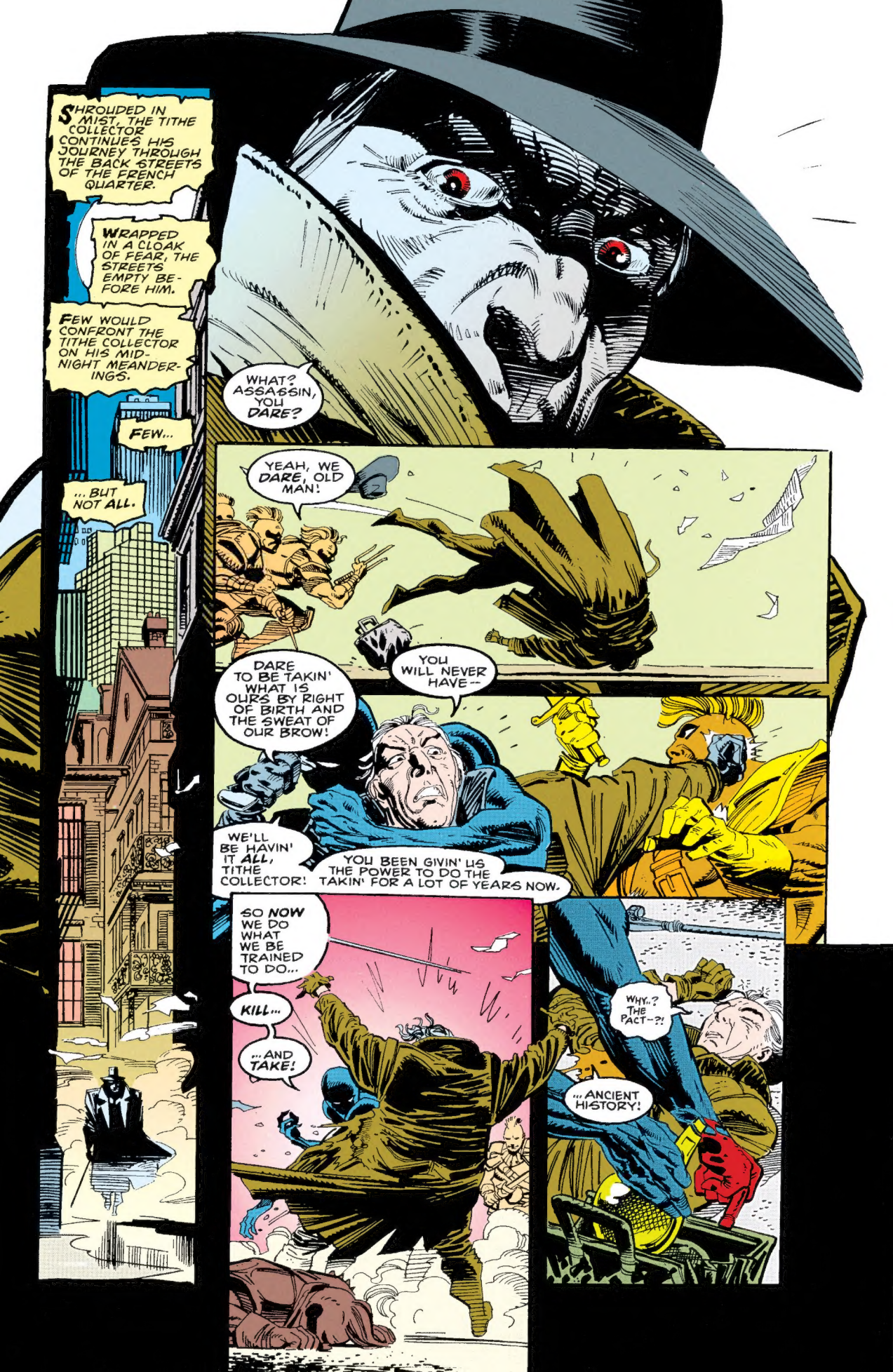

FATHER...
...YOUR SUFFERING BE JUST BEGINNING!
YOU LET HIM TAKE MY BELOVED SISTER... AGAIN?
FOR THIS, KILLING YOU WOULD BE SO EASY.
YOU AND ALL THE WEAK ONES WHO CLAIM THE NAME ASSASSIN.
TIME'S COME FOR OUR GUILD TO BE RE-NEGOTIATIN' THE OLD PACTS.
THE POWERS AND THE LIFE CAN BE OURS.
HAVIN' HAD A TASTE OF BOTH... I WANT IT ALL.
YOU WILL FAIL, JULIEN! I WILL SEE TO IT.
YOU BE DOIN' NOTHING, FATHER! THE ELIXIR AND BELLA DONNA WILL BE MINE!
YOU WON'T BE POISONIN' HER MIND AGAINST ME NO MORE.
BELLA DONNA WILL SIT BY MY SIDE AT THE NEW ASSASSINS GUILD!
T'INK ABOUT THAT, FATHER!
SHAKT
DE OLD WAYS BE DEAD!

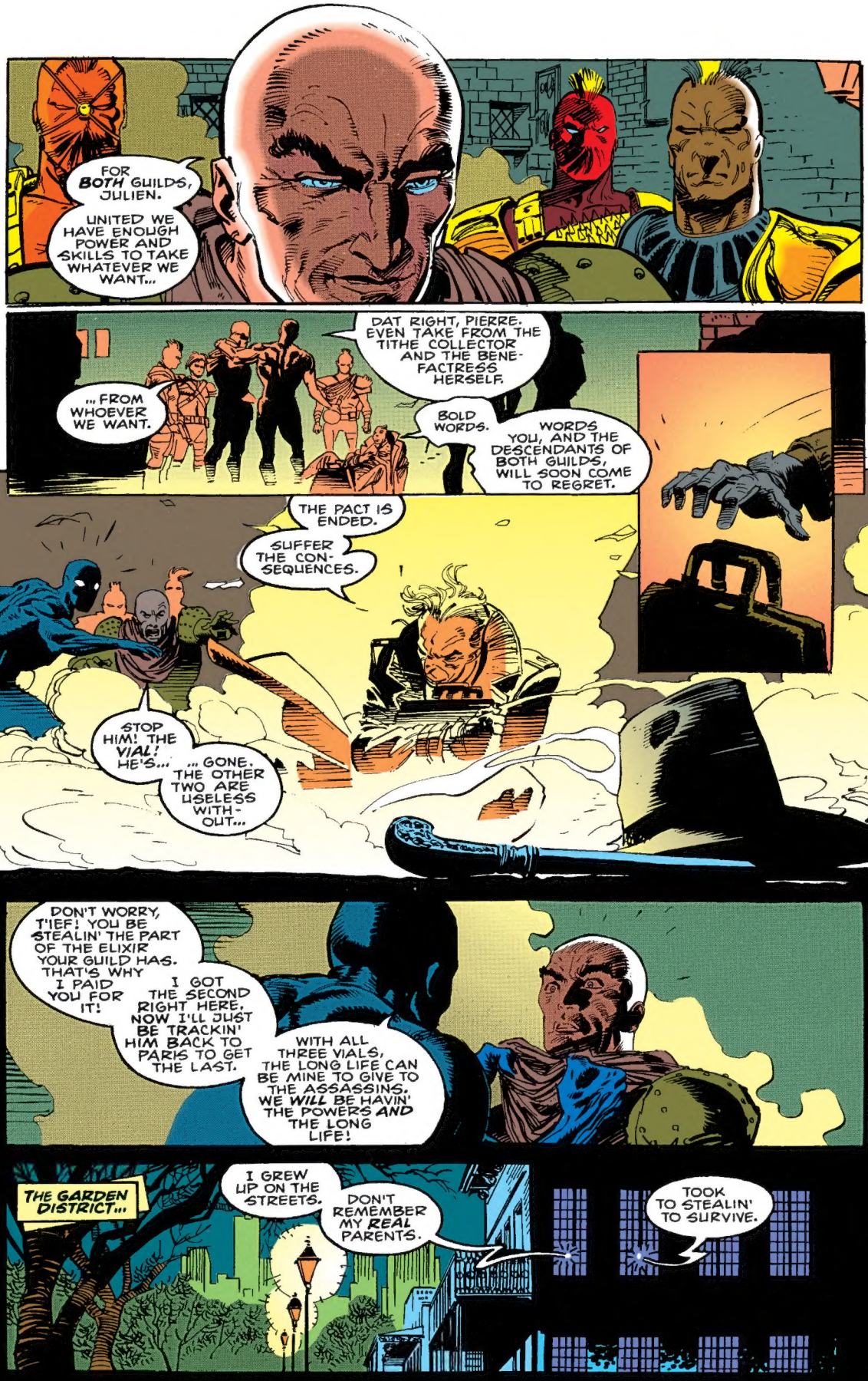
IN AN UNDERGROUND CHAMBER BENEATH THE FRENCH QUARTER...
...THE TITHING CEREMONY COMMENCES.
MEMBERS OF THE TEN FAMILIES OF THIEVES STAND READY TO PRESENT TRIBUTE TO THE TITHE COLLECTOR IN EXCHANGE FOR...
...LONG LIFE. IT IS OUR PACT.
IT IS YOUR RIGHT.
THE ELIXIR OF LIFE IN EXCHANGE FOR THE TITHE, JEAN-LUC LEBEAU.
BY THE GRACE OF CANDRA, THE BENEFACTRESS, I GIVE YOU THE FIRST VIAL --
FWAKOOM
FATHER!
WE WILL HAVE WORDS!
FAMILY BUSINESS, ROGUE. YOU DO NOT HAVE T'BE HERE.
WHAT'S GOING ON HERE, SUGAH?
I'M NOT LEAVIN' YOU ON YOUR OWN AGAIN.

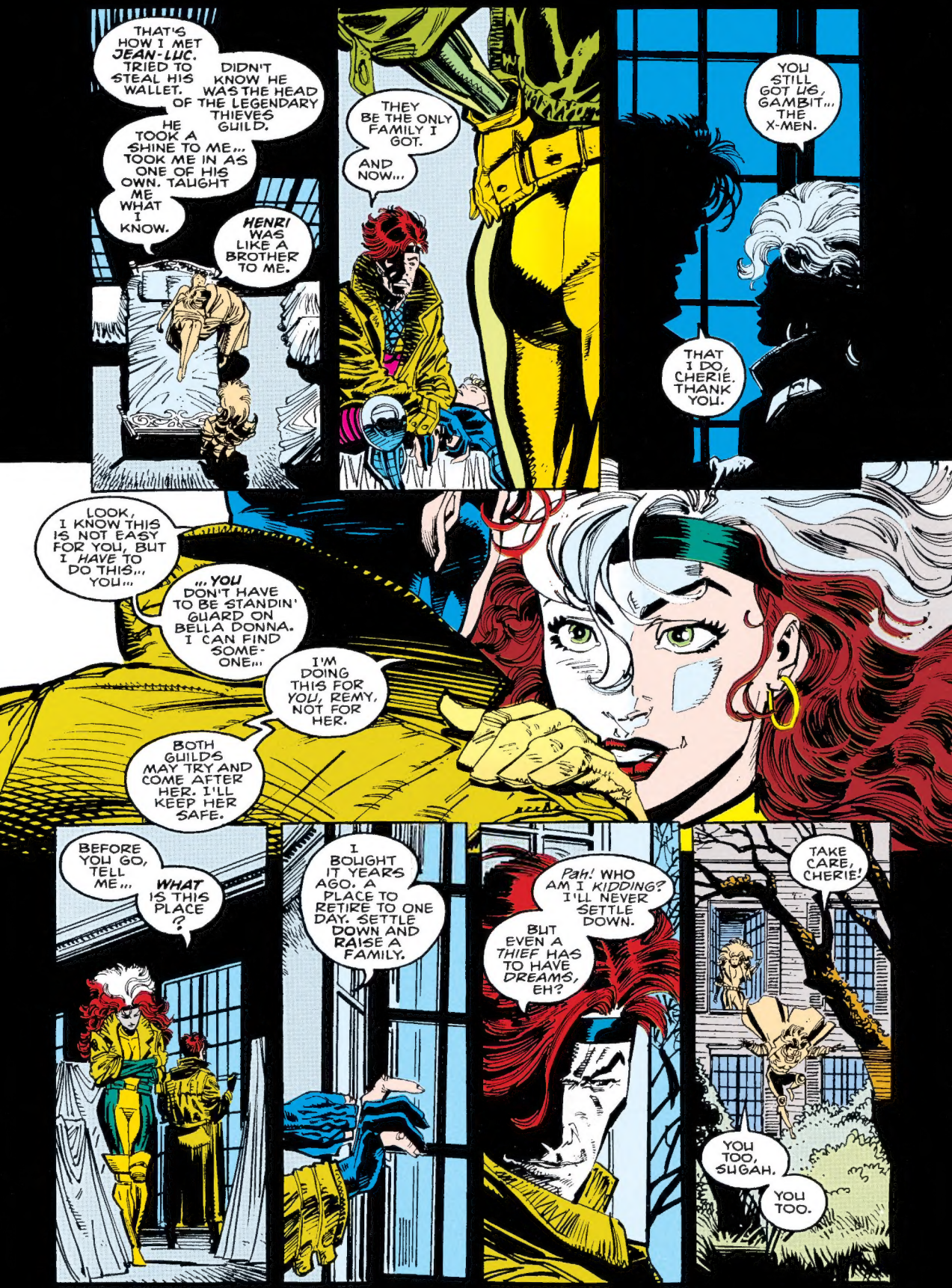
REMY! WHAT HAVE YOU DONE?
THE TITHING CEREMONY ...
...IS OVER.
SETTLE YOUR BUSINESS, QUICKLY, THIEVES, OR THE REMAINING ELIXIR RETURNS TO CANDRA...
...AND THE PACT IS BROKEN.
HE IS GONE!
THE ELIXIR?
YOU DARE DISRUPT THE ANCIENT CEREMONY, REMY LEBEAU?! FOR THIS YOU SHALL...
ENOUGH.
THIS IS MY SON...
...WE WILL SPEAK. THE CEREMONY WILL CONTINUE.

SHORTLY...
HOW MANY MORE ARE TO DIE, FATHER?
IS NOT THE DEATH OF YOUR SON... MY BROTHER... ENOUGH? MUST MY WIFE TOO PAY THE PRICE OF ANCIENT FEUDS?
THE ELIXIR CAN SAVE HER. I WANT IT.
HENRI, DEAD?
NEVER!
YOU WILL HAVE NOTHING, REMY!
PIERRE...
...I WAS TALKIN' TO MY FATHER...
THE ELIXIR, FATHER...
...OR WOULD YOU HAVE ME TURN ASSASSIN RIGHT HERE?
IT CANNOT BE. EVEN IF WE HAD ALL THREE VIALS, I COULD NOT GIVE ANY TO AN OUTSIDER.
HAVE IT YOUR WAY, FATHER...
GAMBIT!
YOU DON'T WANT TO DO THIS, REMY. THIS ISN'T YOU.

OF COURSE IT'S NOT, CHERIE.
BUT THEN AGAIN...
...YOU DON'T KNOW ME AS *WELL* AS YOU *THINK* YOU DO!
NO ONE DOES!
FWAKOOM
FWAKOOM
FWAKOOM
YOU ALL WRAP YOURSELVES IN THE ANCIENT RITUALS, FATHER ... THE *OLD* WAYS.
LIVE BENEATH THE STREETS LIKE PAUPERS...
...WHILE YOU LET THE *WEALTH* SLIP THROUGH YOUR FINGERS.
YOU GIVE *EVERYTHING* AWAY IN EXCHANGE FOR LONG LIFE.
THAT IS *NOT* LIVING.
MY BROTHER IS DEAD. MY WIFE *WILL* BE SAVED.
IF MY FAMILY WILL NOT HELP ME WITH THIS...
...THEN I WILL DO IT MYSELF.
MOURN THE LOSS OF *TWO* SONS, JEAN-LUC LEBEAU.
WE NEED ALL *THREE* VIALS FOR THE *ELIXIR* TO BE COMPLETE. REMY CANNOT BE ALLOWED TO *BETRAY* US.
I KNOW.


SHROUDED IN MIST, THE TITHE COLLECTOR CONTINUES HIS JOURNEY THROUGH THE BACK STREETS OF THE FRENCH QUARTER.
WRAPPED IN A CLOAK OF FEAR, THE STREETS EMPTY BEFORE HIM.
FEW WOULD CONFRONT THE TITHE COLLECTOR ON HIS MIDNIGHT MEANDERINGS.
FEW...
...BUT NOT ALL.
WHAT? ASSASSIN, YOU DARE?
YEAH, WE DARE, OLD MAN!
DARE TO BE TAKIN' WHAT IS OURS BY RIGHT OF BIRTH AND THE SWEAT OF OUR BROW!
YOU WILL NEVER HAVE--
WE'LL BE HAVIN' IT ALL, TITHE COLLECTOR!
YOU BEEN GIVIN' US THE POWER TO DO THE TAKIN' FOR A LOT OF YEARS NOW.
SO NOW WE DO WHAT WE BE TRAINED TO DO...
KILL...
...AND TAKE!
WHY..? THE PACT--?!
...ANCIENT HISTORY!


FOR BOTH GUILDS, JULIEN.
UNITED WE HAVE ENOUGH POWER AND SKILLS TO TAKE WHATEVER WE WANT...
... FROM WHOEVER WE WANT.
DAT RIGHT, PIERRE. EVEN TAKE FROM THE TITHE COLLECTOR AND THE BENE-FACTRESS HERSELF.
BOLD WORDS.
WORDS YOU, AND THE DESCENDANTS OF BOTH GUILDS, WILL SOON COME TO REGRET.
THE PACT IS ENDED.
SUFFER THE CON-SEQUENCES.
STOP HIM! THE VIAL! HE'S...
... GONE. THE OTHER TWO ARE USELESS WITH-OUT...
DON'T WORRY, T'IEF! YOU BE STEALIN' THE PART OF THE ELIXIR YOUR GUILD HAS. THAT'S WHY I PAID YOU FOR IT!
I GOT THE SECOND RIGHT HERE. NOW I'LL JUST BE TRACKIN' HIM BACK TO PARIS TO GET THE LAST.
WITH ALL THREE VIALS, THE LONG LIFE CAN BE MINE TO GIVE TO THE ASSASSINS. WE WILL BE HAVIN' THE POWERS AND THE LONG LIFE!
THE GARDEN DISTRICT...
I GREW UP ON THE STREETS.
DON'T REMEMBER MY REAL PARENTS.
TOOK TO STEALIN' TO SURVIVE.


THAT'S HOW I MET JEAN-LUC. TRIED TO STEAL HIS WALLET.
DIDN'T KNOW HE WAS THE HEAD OF THE LEGENDARY THIEVES GUILD.
HE TOOK A SHINE TO ME... TOOK ME IN AS ONE OF HIS OWN. TAUGHT ME WHAT I KNOW.
HENRI WAS LIKE A BROTHER TO ME.
THEY BE THE ONLY FAMILY I GOT.
AND NOW...
YOU STILL GOT US, GAMBIT... THE X-MEN.
THAT I DO, CHERIE. THANK YOU.
LOOK, I KNOW THIS IS NOT EASY FOR YOU, BUT I HAVE TO DO THIS... YOU...
...YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE STANDIN' GUARD ON BELLA DONNA. I CAN FIND SOME-ONE...
I'M DOING THIS FOR YOU, REMY, NOT FOR HER.
BOTH GUILDS MAY TRY AND COME AFTER HER. I'LL KEEP HER SAFE.
BEFORE YOU GO, TELL ME... WHAT IS THIS PLACE?
I BOUGHT IT YEARS AGO. A PLACE TO RETIRE TO ONE DAY. SETTLE DOWN AND RAISE A FAMILY.
PAH! WHO AM I KIDDING? I'LL NEVER SETTLE DOWN.
BUT EVEN A THIEF HAS TO HAVE DREAMS, EH?
TAKE CARE, CHERIE!
YOU TOO, SUGAH.
YOU TOO.

...TO YOU AN' ME ALONE, GIRL.
SO, TELL ME, BELLA DONNA...
...ARE YOU THE DREAM OF A THIEF?
A SHORT TIME LATER...
YOU RETURN TO A WOUNDED MAN, REMY?
SORRY TO SEE THAT, MARIUS, BUT... I NEED YOUR HELP.
HAVE INFORMATION THAT CAN HELP ME SAVE BELL'S LIFE.
IT WILL MEAN BETRAYING YOUR GUILD... YOUR FAMILY.
I CAN LIVE WITH IT.
PARIS...
I HATE TO LEAVE YOU WHEN THINGS GO BADLY WITH YOUR BUSINESS, CANDRA...
...BUT I HAVE MY OWN AFFAIRS TO ATTEND.
DO NOT CONCERN YOURSELF WITH ME, GIDEON...
...EVERYTHING WILL BE RESOLVED AS PLANNED.
TO BE CONTINUED...